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ABSTRACT

When the Chicago School Reform Act was first passed, many worried that the legislation would usher adversarial politics into the school building. This paper describes parent and community involvement in school decision making at Sprague Elementary school, which serves 1,500 Latino students. The case study chronicles the school's development through three Local School Councils and three principals. Data were collected through participant observation and interviews with parents, community members, teachers, and principals. At the end of the first 2 years of reform, the school community was mired in an all-consuming war over power and control. However, the Sprague case illustrates a victory of "democratic localism" that crossed the lines of role, ethnicity, and class. The Sprague school community was poor but had strong social resources. Parents, community members, and teachers with no prior involvement in governance educated themselves about issues and the law. The election of the third school council contributed to a sense of continuity and stability that the school desperately needed. The battle energized the broader parent community, catalyzed their social resources, and focused their attention on issues of school improvement. Five years after the passage of reform, the school had an activist principal, a supportive council, a broader parent community, and a newly roused faculty. (Contains 27 references and 73 endnotes). (LMI)

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April 1996

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The Rise and Fall of Adversarial Politics in the Context of Chicago School Reform:

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December, 1994

Chicago School Reform conceives of politics as a force for organizational change. This view seems strange to many, both in Chicago and elsewhere as traditional notions of politics--and especially notorious Chicago politics--conjure up strong images. One such image is that of Alinsky-style organizers who rally the "have-nots" to oust principals and take over schools. When the Chicago School Reform Act was first passed many worried that the legislation would usher this style of community politics directly into the school building. As bad as Chicago schools were, some feared that this might make them even worse.

Over the first four years of reform adversarial politics have developed in less than ten percent of Chicago schools.[1] These sites are marked by sustained conflict which focuses on issues of power and control--who gets elected to the Local School Council, and who the principal will be. While the percentage of schools afflicted by this type of political practice is relatively low, this activity has proved debilitating to those school communities.

Sprague is racially isolated, Latino elementary school in Chicago serving 1,500 students.[2] This case study chronicles its development through three Local School Councils and three principals. During this time the authors have been participant observers at the school; attending LSC and other meetings and school activities, and conducting extensive interviews with parents, community members, teachers and principals. Parent and community involvement in decision-making is a main focus of the story, first because enhancing this participation was a main aim of Chicago's reform, and second because involvement in decision-making overwhelmed other forms of parental involvement during the period of this research. The passage of Chicago school reform at Sprague catalyzed significant activity. It opened up the school to the politics of the larger community and significantly changed relations of power between professionals, parents and community members.

Cast of Main Characters

Pre-reform	
Principal:	Mr. McNamara
First & second year of reform	
Principal:	Ricardo Castaneda
LSC chair:	Jose Guiterrez
LSC community representatives:	Julia Martinez
	Carlos Aguirre
Third year of reform	
Principal:	Sylvia Ramirez
LSC chair:	Ramon Salinas
LSC parent member:	Manuel Hernandez
Fourth year of reform	
Principal:	Daniel Swenson
LSC chair:	Manuel Hernandez
Fifth year of reform	
Principal:	Daniel Swenson
LSC chair:	Anita Baez
LSC parent member:	Manuel Hernandez
Significant others	
Sub-district superintendent:	Margarita Acosta
Castaneda's brother:	Mike Castaneda
LSC teacher representative:	Juan Alvarez

The Rise and Fall of Adversarial Politics in the Context of Chicago School Reform: Parent Participation in a Latino School Community

Background on Parent Participation

According to a recent Racial/Ethnic Student Survey of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), Latino students make up nearly 30% of the school population, second only to African-Americans.[3] Of these students, approximately 70% are of Mexican and Mexican-American background.[4] The most severely overcrowded schools in the district are in Latino neighborhoods, and this population continues to grow more rapidly than any other. Chicago's reform seems to have been especially embraced by the Latino community, especially during its early implementation. For example, voter turn-out for the first Local School Council (LSC) elections for parents and community members was higher at Latino schools than African-American ones.

Beyond the numbers, however, little is known to date about the character or impact of parent and community involvement in Chicago's Latino school communities since the passage of reform.[5] Neither has there been much documentation of Latino participation in school governance activities in other districts. For example, the level of Latino representation on Boards of Education in 142 school districts which had at least 5,000 students and 5% Latino enrollment was examined in 1991.[6] Latinos were under-represented on these boards in comparison to their population. Numerous explanations are offered for this. One concerns election design. The majority of Board of Education elections are held at-large rather than at a more local, ward level. This structure tends to disadvantage poor and minority candidates who may not have the financial resources to develop a

political organization large enough to mount a citywide campaign. Minority candidates have fared better when running for positions in more local elections.

Another explanation for under-representation is the fact that many Latinos are not U.S. citizens, but rather permanent residents or undocumented. This means they are not eligible to be candidates, nor can they vote for those who do run (including eligible Latino candidates).

Architects of Chicago reform were aware of these barriers to Latino participation, and they specifically designed the LSC elections in Chicago to avoid these problems. For instance, in neighborhood schools, LSC voting and school attendance boundaries are the same--a provision that was intended to advantage local parents and residents.[7] Even more importantly, citizenship is not a criteria for voting in an LSC election, only proof of residency. Thus, two of the variables which have traditionally led to depressed Latino participation and representation nationally, were deliberately removed in Chicago.

Moving beyond simple voting patterns, it is also important as background to consider what we already know about the participation of Latino parents around school affairs. Bilingual education programs are a second context where Latino parent participation has been examined. Initially funded by the federal government in 1968, the Bilingual Education Act added a stipulation in 1974 that parents participate in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of Title VII programs.[8] A commission that later evaluated the impact of this provision determined that parental participation in bilingual advisory committees was "limited."[9]

In the mid-1970's individual states began to support bilingual education programs.[10] Many included a legislative provision to establish Parent Advisory Councils (PACs). These were intended to give parents a greater voice in decision-making, and to assist individual school districts with

program implementation. Needless to say, program administrators were accountable to state educational agencies, rather than the PACs, or the local community. Because the PACs were out of the accountability loop, the majority of such advisory committees had little recourse but to rubberstamp the decisions of professionals, and make appearances at public functions on demand.[11] They had little impact on the policy-making that affected their programs.[12]

The role of ESEA Title VII Advisory Councils was also examined in the late 1970's in Texas.[13] There the typical committee member was a Mexican-American, female parent of a child in the bilingual program. A five stage classification system was designed to distinguish between different levels of citizen participation on these councils. These included: 1) Placation role; 2) Sanctions role; 3) Information; 4) Checks and Balances; and 5) Change Agent.[14] None of the councils examined were classified at either of the two highest stages of the continuum--checks and balances or change agent. Clearly, these councils did not facilitate parents' involvement in governance.

The most recent studies of Hispanic parental involvement continue to focus on specific bilingual and/or Title VII school programs.[15] Interestingly, these investigate parental involvement in a variety of activities other than decision-making; for example, participation on monthly parent education workshops, reading to their children at home (in Spanish), listening to their children read, and/or volunteering in classrooms. Since these activities aim to help parents support the academic work of the school and encourage effective home - school connections, all students, including those from Spanish speaking homes, were apt to be more successful.

These data strongly support the contention that Hispanic parents are interested in their children's education and wish to help their children succeed academically. Parents need support and encouragement from school level professionals, however, because they may lack confidence in their

ability to help, or in some instances may not realize that their children would benefit from their help. Yet another barrier is lack of familiarity with the U.S. educational system for those parents who were themselves educated elsewhere. Formally organized parent training and advocacy programs in Spanish which provide information about the school system as well as parents' potential role as their children's teachers, have proven effective in starting to break down some of these barriers. Through such means Hispanic parents are empowered to advocate for their children and better access the school system.[16] In contrast to Chicago's reform, they do not emphasize participation in school governance activities.

When Chicago reform was passed, many in the advocacy community hoped that it would precipitate significant parent and community involvement among Latino parents. Based on the findings of "limited" involvement in the research that had been done, there were few predictions, however, about the forms of participation that might be catalyzed, nor the intensity of interest that reform might stimulate.

The Neighborhood Context

The Sprague community is predominantly Mexican and Mexican-American. The main street is crowded with small bakeries, hardware stores, bridal shops, taverns, grocery stores, photo studios, medical clinics, clothing stores, banks, and restaurants. Foot and car traffic is heavy, especially on weekends and cool summer nights. Although many people drive to malls to do their major shopping, there are enough employed neighborhood residents to maintain this economically viable commercial strip. Also, most merchants in the neighborhood cater to the local clientelle by stocking items from Mexico and talking to their customers in Spanish. These are services that large, impersonal malls are

unlikely to offer.

Shortly after the turn of the century, and continuing until about thirty years ago, the area was home to white, working-class immigrants from Eastern Europe.[17] They worked primarily at International Harvester and Western Electric, two large factories that were located in the neighborhood. But these factories are gone and so are most of the unionized jobs with good benefits. Today, most of the men are underemployed, scraping out a meager income working in service industries, or traveling to the small, suburban factories that now dot the metropolitan ring. If it is economically feasible, mothers try to stay home to take care of their pre-school children (and sometimes those of their neighbors and relatives). Some two-parent households work alternate shifts, or depend on an extended family network, to avoid paying babysitters. Thus, a daily work routine settles upon this neighborhood. The women can be seen walking their elementary-age children to school, with toddlers in tow, and the residential streets empty as the men depart for work at daybreak and return in the early evening.

Sprague's community is more densely populated now than ever before because so many of the current residents struggle to bring family members up from Mexico, and then crowd them into their small apartments and bungalows. Many Mexican families also move here from other parts of the city, because the neighborhood is considered "better" than some of the communities where they live when they first arrive. Nevertheless, no one wants to stay for long, and so those who are able to save some money often pool it with relatives. They leave the neighborhood for greener pastures, either settling in a few south or west suburbs that are no longer all-white, or in other somewhat more affluent Latino neighborhoods on Chicago's southwest side.

The community is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, and cards which state, "Este hogar es

Catholico" (This home is Catholic), are posted on the front door of homes to rebuff door-to-door proselytizers of other faiths. There are at least five Catholic Churches within twelve blocks of Sprague, and several of these have a parish school. Mass is offered in English and Spanish, with the latter standing room only on most Sundays.

The vitality and stability of this working class community is threatened, nevertheless. Of paramount concern--more so than underemployment and overcrowded housing--is the spread of gangs. The bulk of violence in the neighborhood is attributed to gangs whose confrontations over turf--and associated drug traffic--too often exacts a fatal toll on the neighborhood's youth. Rival Latino gangs vie for control of neighborhood blocks, and graffiti on buildings, garages and schools mark off their territory. School attendance boundaries do not necessarily coincide with the ever-shifting gang turf. This means that walking to school is a risk for most children as gang lines are inevitably crossed. Annual gang recruitment begins in earnest as soon as the snow starts to melt, and it is the intermediate and upper grade students of schools like Sprague that are especially vulnerable.

To counteract the encroachment of gangs, many resources have been developed, both by the city and neighborhood residents, to create alternatives for youth. These include the local Boys' Club, recreational activities organized by the Chicago Park District, an alternative high school targeted to drop-outs, as well as other community-based organizations (CBOs) which offer social and educational services such as counseling, General Education Degree and English as a Second Language classes.

Many block clubs have also been organized in the last several years to enhance residents' sense of security and combat the rise of gangs. The block club organizations are often encouraged by local

politicians. An alderman, for example, might use his office's resources to help get a club started, and then, in turn, count on the club's membership for help at election time. Other block clubs spring up informally, to confront more immediate problems, such as when a drug dealer moves in on a residential block. Members also look out for each other's homes, and notify the police whenever danger is suspected. Block club members have also been emboldened in some instances to confront gang members and their parents since some of these young people are neighbors.

In addition to providing some resistance to gangs, the block clubs have had some unintended, positive consequences as well. Through them, the adults in the neighborhood get a chance to get to know each other, and each other's children, and they organize various activities such as weekend clean-ups and block parties. These block clubs have become a vital mechanism for friendly, face-to-face interaction as neighbors come to care for one another, and break down the anonymity that otherwise enables crime to flourish.

The 1980's brought other changes to this community as well. Local political representation became an issue of contention in Latino neighborhoods across the city, including Sprague's. The traditional white, ethnic, Democratic "machine" candidates that had dominated the ward for decades clashed with burgeoning Latino independent political forces. In recent aldermanic races, some independent Latino candidates have beat the "machine," in part because of grass-roots political operations. These campaigns tend to be organized around door-to-door canvassing, and informal get-togethers where residents invite candidates to their home and encourage their neighbors to stop in and chat with them. Similarly, both aspiring and incumbent politicians seek invitations to school events so that they can meet potential voters. Because Sprague is one of the largest elementary schools in the CPS, local politicians clamor for opportunities to be introduced there.

Over the last decade both independent and conservative Latino candidates have been elected in the city, with neither totally dominating the landscape. In the immediate vicinity of Sprague, however, more independent candidates have won.[18]

The Involvement of Community Based Organizations

Community based organizations in Chicago were among the many groups that advocated for reform in the 1980s.[19] Once the legislation passed, some of the most active of these formed a citywide network, the Chicago School Reform Training Task Force, which received over a million dollars in funding from the city's business and philanthropic communities to work within their local communities to increase the public's awareness and interest regarding reform.[20]

Several of the CBOs which were active in this citywide network originally had been organized by Alinsky or his proteges. Following in his tradition, these groups perceived of school reform as a useful vehicle through which to organize parents and community residents.[21] Prior to the first LSC election, these CBOs encouraged people to run on slates, and offered campaign advice and some resources. The organizers worked especially hard at election time in neighborhoods like Sprague's, encouraging candidates to go door to door to "get out the vote." Once LSCs were elected, the network developed training materials in English and Spanish, and offered to provide the thirty hours of training that was mandated in the law. The organizers who staffed these first sessions focused especially on the role and power of the LSC to hire and fire the principal.[22] They typically blamed the school's professional staff, and especially the principal, for the low standardized test scores that plagued the vast majority of Chicago schools.[23] Their materials stated:

> **The principal's role has changed**...If the principal is not doing a good job, he or she must answer to the Local School Council. The principal is "accountable" to the Council. (emphasis in the original) [24]

One Alinsky-style CBO that became involved in the Sprague school community was CABA.[25] While CABA was one of Chicago's older, Latino CBOs, in the 1980's many of its local chapters were largely inactive and little known. It was re-energized when it joined the citywide coalition that had advocated for reform legislation--the largest Latino CBO to do so. Then, when the law passed, CABA received a $150,000 grant from one of Chicago's biggest, banks to deliver LSC training and continue its advocacy of reform. This, in combination with some smaller grants, made CABA one of the best-funded organizations in the city to work on these issues.[26]

> With that money it [CABA] was able to print flyers, produce radio commercials, hire 100 canvassers and, as a result, generate a turnout of about 35% in several Southeast, Near South and Near North side schools...As a result of the higher than expected turnout, CABA sympathizers now control at least two dozen local school councils.[27]

In the Sprague community CABA used its close connection with Catholic churches to get the word out about the first round of LSC elections. For example, parishioners were invited to informational meetings, some of which were held in the church's facilities. Parents and community residents who came were encouraged to run on slates for the LSC. According to CABA organizers, it was the parents who determined who would run together on a slate, not CABA. Regardless of how it was organized, the slating strategy proved successful at Sprague as six of the candidates that ran on a slate sponsored by CABA were elected to the first LSC; four parents and two community representatives. In fact, one of the community representatives, Julia Martinez, was CABA's local chapter president. She had formerly been employed at one of the neighborhood churches, St. Joseph, where many of Sprague's families were parishioners. The second community representative, Carlos Aguirre, joined CABA shortly after he was elected. Similarly, the first chair of the Sprague LSC, Jose Guiterrez, also had a connection to CABA. In an interview, he specifically praised the CBO for

encouraging his participation in school reform:

> I went to a fiesta that was held at St. Joseph's and there were persons looking for people who wanted to present themselves as a candidate. I said to myself, "Well, why not?"...I won, thanks, I'm going to tell you, thanks to CABA who were the ones from the very beginning who were giving me all the information regarding the reform, and what it was that they were looking for with that reform. [translation]

Thus, at Sprague, CABA played a pivotal role in focusing people's attention on school reform and LSC elections. They also successfully assisted some parents and community residents with strong ties to the organization to get elected. Unknown at this early stage was what role, if any, CABA would play in the development of reform at Sprague school.

The School

Sprague first opened its doors in 1938, and for five decades all of its principals were white men. The last of them was Mr. McNamara. He took over in 1980, and died unexpectedly seven years later. McNamara had been greatly admired by the majority of parents and staff. Reminiscing about him one teacher told us: "When he passed away a lot of people in the neighborhood missed him terribly. He had learned to speak Spanish...by listening to tapes in his car." Another teacher echoed this sentiment:

> He made the faculty feel good...He had the type of personality that made you feel he was an easy-going guy. He made you feel like working...He was a good leader, and the people worked together. There was unity. When he passed away, all of a sudden, it seemed as though cliques --they exist anyway--but it seemed like everybody kind of just ran to their little corner.

With McNamara gone, the Local School Improvement Council (LSIC) asked the central office to send the school someone who could speak Spanish.[28] The LSIC recommended three individuals, and Ric Castaneda was eventually assigned. Castaneda was a central office administrator

without experience in the principalship. The school community was nonetheless pleased with this appointment because Castaneda was Hispanic, male, and bilingual, and there were relatively few Latinos in the district who had their administrative credentials at that time. Castaneda took the helm of a huge school. There was an old main building and two more modern, but still run-down, add-on buildings. These facilities were all so overcrowded that in spite of the union contract, many teachers had as many as 40 students assigned to them. Programs such as pre-school, science labs and resource rooms could not be provided because there was no available space. The situation was so extreme that some children were bussed out of the attendance area. A promise to build five new schools in the community, first made by the Board of Education in 1989, was not realized during the period of this research. One teacher describes what it is like to work in such a huge school:

> In a school this size, when you have 50 kids in the hall, running up and down the halls, smoking in the bathroom, writing on the walls....oftentimes, upper grade children think they can run the school as opposed to somebody should be in charge.

Not surprisingly for someone coming out of the central office, Castaneda was a managerial leader.[29] He could generally be found in his office doing paperwork, in meetings, or on the phone. He did not have a freed assistant principal; rather his only assistant was a full-time, classroom teacher.[30] Without a support staff, Castaneda clearly had his hands full trying to manage day-to-day operations of his school. Some of the faculty recognized the enormity of the task, but criticized him, nevertheless, for not being more of a presence in the building. An intermediate level teacher said:

> This is so overwhelming. 1500 students in a school like this...He should go around, looking in every day, walking through the halls, showing who he is, telling this kid not to do that, going into the classroom, even if it is just to say hello or whatever.

Because Castaneda did not often walk the halls during recess or at the beginning or end of the day, he was largely uninvolved with discipline and security--issues particularly worrisome to

parents because of the gang activity in and around the building. A few parents complained that it was difficult to get an appointment to see Castaneda, and that "the principal never has time to talk because he says always that he is too busy." Running such a large school hampered Castaneda's ability to be an instructional leader. His assistant principal, John Drake, who had been one of the three finalists to become principal when McNamara died, suggested that he did not even adequately supervise teachers.

> Do you know how many times teachers were visited by this person? Never. Lesson plans were never checked. How the hell does he know what's going on in the classroom, if he doesn't go to the classroom?

Castaneda acknowledged: "I don't have as much time as I would like to do teacher observations," he told us. "That's where I wish I had more time."

Drake's criticism did not end there, however. He felt that Sprague had too many different programs, and that Castaneda did little to help administer and coordinate them properly. The friction that existed between Castaneda and Drake was obvious to others. The school's first PPAC chair said:

> In certain schools like ours...the administration...I'm talking about principals, assistant principals, they have to work together. In some schools, they don't. And this is not the only school...that the administration is not working together, for whatever reason.

Three years after he became principal, Castaneda found himself in a difficult situation. The new demands of reform were coming on top of what seemed to be an already impossible job.[31] His overcrowded facility, lack of administrative support and friction with the assistant principal he did have, the school's persistent gang problem, and low student achievement only added to his burden.[32]

There was one bright spot in the school, however, and that was parental involvement. McNamara had encouraged parent participation, and in his tenure at the school he fostered broad involvement in a number of parent organizations, such as the LSIC, the Parent-Teachers' Organization

(PTO), the Bilingual Advisory Council, and the Father's Club. The LSIC, as noted earlier, was involved with the selection of Castaneda as principal, even though prior to reform, the final decision was made by the sub-district superintendent. The PTO primarily conducted fundraisers and sponsored several social activities during the school year. According to Castaneda, "It's an organization that has had tremendous impact, consistent impact, on the school." The Father's Club also met on a regular basis, frequently getting parents and community residents together to remove graffiti from the building, and strategize about ways to strengthen security. The Bilingual Advisory Committee, however, was not pro-active.[33] It functioned more like the "rubber stamp" committees that have been described in other sites.[34]

Ironically, Chicago's reform legislation had some unforseen and perhaps unintended consequences at Sprague regarding parental involvement. The emphasis in the legislation on the formation and role of the LSC dampened interest for a time in the other parent committees. Although parent organizations such as the PTO, Fathers' Club and Bilingual Advisory continued to meet during the early years of reform, activities of the LSC channeled some of the most active parents away from these other committees and dramatically overshadowed their efforts.

Sprague's first LSC

Our research began during the fall of 1990, one year after the first LSC had been elected. The first several council meetings that we attended were long and uneventful and it seemed that Sprague's LSC met its responsibilities with little visible fanfare or strife. Generally, there would be a series of reports from the principal, and the council would discuss, and for the most part approve, a variety of school programs and policies that he recommended. At one meeting, for example, a plan was presented to upgrade the park district property around Sprague so that it would be more attractive

and useable. At another, the council approved a policy regarding over-crowding. The council did not have much use for Roberts' Rules of Order, as there seemed to be so little of consequence that needed to be structured, organized or controlled. The LSC did, however, use formal procedures when votes were taken, and time was set aside for public participation at the end of each monthly meeting.

While there were no outward signs of any serious conflicts between the principal and the council at this early juncture, interviews with council members suggest that there were some reservations about Castaneda's performance. The council chair, Jose Guiterrez, commented:

> He [Castaneda] should be a little more patient, and help us understand the [school's] problems. Include us more as people who are with him, and not against him, because a lot of times, the principal thinks that we are against him. [translation]

Castaneda was in the second round of contract review, which meant that he was evaluated by his council during the second year of reform.[35] Sprague's LSC began their deliberations that November, talking not about Castaneda at first, but rather how they would structure the evaluation and solicit input from the entire school community. Both the chair and Carlos Aguirre, the community representative, told us that the council went to several trainings including some on principal evaluation that were offered by numerous advocacy groups as well as the district at that time.[36] In addition to this training, the council invited an attorney from the CPS Law Department to their December meeting to advise them on process. The LSC went into executive session for some of this discussion, even though they were talking about evaluation criteria, and not specific personnel issues. But no one in the audience objected to the closed meeting at this point, or even mentioned that it might be unnecessary or inappropriate.[37]

While it is not known what went on behind closed doors, Aguirre and Martinez, the two

community members aligned with CABA, took an aggressive stance in the discussions about the principal's evaluation that took place in open sessions during this period of time. They were certainly the most sophisticated members of the council, because they brought with them extensive experience gained at CABA. Their knowledge and experience made them an important human resource to the council, even if they were later perceived by some to be biased by their affiliation with CABA. Both were very conversant about specifics of the reform legislation, and so at an early December meeting when it was recommended that both parent/community and teacher surveys be drafted, they took on the task of developing the parent/community survey themselves. (Several teachers in the audience volunteered to be responsible for the development of the teacher survey.) Later, when the draft of the parent/community survey was presented in open session to the council, the wording of specific items was hashed and rehashed.

This discussion took place in front of a large audience of parents and teachers. After a lengthy debate by the council over the wording and inclusion of specific items, the council approved the parent/community survey and voted that it be administered to parents and interested community members at a special evening meeting that same week.

Parents in the audience were frustrated. Since many worked nights and would not be able to attend an evening meeting, they suggested that the council send the surveys home with students instead. The council rejected this proposal, and countered by offering to schedule a second meeting to re-administer the survey if too few parents attended the first. In particular, Martinez raised a security issue, stating that there was no way to validate who actually filled out the forms if students took them home. A few parents complained more generally that they had not been involved in the development of the survey, but their comments seemed to fall on deaf ears.

In the same meeting, the council reviewed and revised the survey which the teachers had drafted. Specifically, the teachers wanted two different surveys developed--one for faculty and one for non-teaching staff--but Martinez and Aguirre argued that they all fill out the same one. Moreover, Martinez and Aguirre struck the last question, which asked whether Castaneda should be retained or not. Martinez said that it was legally the council's decision, and she did not want a "referenda" from the faculty on the principal. The teachers appeared frustrated, but gave up when they realized that they had no recourse but to defer to the council's authority.

This meeting marked the first time that there was public disagreement--albeit mild--between the council and the broader parent and teacher groups. In spite of the complaints and questions that were raised, the council went ahead with all of its plans.

The LSC's next activity was to hold the special meeting to administer the parent/community survey. About eighty people showed up, filling the room to capacity.[38] Some parents and community residents were concerned that this might be their only opportunity to make their voices heard. The principal's brother, Mike Castaneda, was also in the audience. This was the first of many meetings that he would attend.

Guiterrez started the meeting by passing out an informational sheet to the audience. The sheet made specific reference to that section of the reform legislation which empowered the council to make the final decision regarding the principal. One parent was skeptical that the LSC was, in fact, the duly state-authorized body in this matter. He asked, "In what book can this [school reform] law be found? Where can we read about this law?" Guiterrez referred again to the sheet, and assured this individual and the audience that no decision would be made until the parents' surveys had been taken into consideration.

The mood of the audience was mistrustful, and the rest of the meeting was chaotic. Guiterrez was unable to control the proceedings, as parents refused to hold their remarks until the end of the meeting. Rather, they interrupted him at will with questions and comments. One father asked, "Who's responsible for this meeting? This is a disaster." Later, another father interrupted Guiterrez and called for a show of hands in opposition to the principal. No hands went up. He then asked who wanted Castaneda to stay, and many hands waved enthusiastically. Martinez stepped in at this point to end the demonstration in support of the principal. She repeated Guiterrez's earlier comment that the final decision was the council's responsibility, as mandated in the legislation. She also reminded the audience that the council had been elected to represent the parents and the community. A parent screamed back, "That was our mistake," and this remark was greeted with foot stomping and applause. Eventually, the surveys were filled out and put in a sealed box. Martinez told the group that the box would be opened at a future LSC meeting.

The LSC voted on the principal's contract at a special meeting in late January. More than one hundred people turned out to witness the public vote, including Castaneda's brother, Mike, as well as the sub-district superintendent, Mrs. Margarita Acosta. As the highest-ranking administrator in the sub-district, she often went to LSC meetings that were potentially contentious. Her formal role was to be a source of expertise regarding policy and procedure. More informally, she was there to calm the crowd and, if need be, provide damage control.

The meeting was called to order and the LSC immediately went into a closed executive session. The frustrations of the audience rose as the wait got longer and longer, and many in the audience began to debate the principal's contract. A microphone had been left on, and while no one organized the impromptu session, people took turns making statements. Most of the comments were

in Spanish, with many side conversations occurring simultaneously. One parent who was opposed to Castaneda's retention said, "Sprague's scores have not been going up in the last few years. The principal should be held responsible." Another father added: "Why does the principal need such a large office for himself when my own child is crowded in the basement next to the boiler room?" After each of these men spoke, however, other parents rose to Castaneda's defense, and his defenders handily outnumbered his critics. Juan Alvarez, a teacher, reminded the group once again that, unfortunately, the decision was in the council's hands. He extolled the parents, however, "to make them [the council] responsible and accountable for their actions." Many audience members nodded their heads in agreement, and rose to their feet to applaud.

An hour passed before the council came back. Virtually no one had left from the audience, in fact, several more families had arrived. Guiterrez asked if there were any final comments before the roll call vote was taken, and there were many. The majority of parents still did not understand the council's reasons for wanting to remove Castaneda. Parents wanted to know what information had been contained in the surveys, where the surveys were, and why they had never been opened publicly as promised.

Jaime Salceda, a parent and president of the Bilingual Advisory Council, challenged the council's authority to vote on the principal's contract. While he understood that the law empowered the LSC to act, he suggested that the law itself was wrong:

> I do not consider the local school council to be a qualified body to disqualify a professional at a school. The parents will have to live with the council's decision because the parents voted for them. It is just like in this country that people voted for President Bush and now he has gotten us into a war.

A few minutes later Salceda added, "Mr. Castaneda is one of the best principals in the area."

At this point, Mrs. Acosta took over the meeting from Guiterrez, and she fielded the questions that were coming fast and furious from the audience. One parent asked, "How long will the current council be in power?" Acosta replied:

> The term of the local school council ends in October. If parents don't like them, parents can vote them out of office. This country is built on a democracy. This process is also like a democracy, and so the parents can vote for whomever they like.

The contentious dialogue between the audience and the council went unchecked for almost half an hour. Then the vote was taken and the decision to "non-retain" was unanimous.[39]

It was then that Castaneda finally spoke. He made an impassioned speech, reminding the audience of some of his accomplishments, and also acknowledging his dismissal:

> Just today, we've begun a pre-school program because there are at least 200 children in this community who require those services. We never had those types of programs before I arrived. When I came the bilingual program was very underserved. I've brought in parental involvement programs and adult education classes...I appreciate your support and hope that you are included in the selection of the new principal. It should be someone who is bilingual, and who can be a role model for the students at this school.

The meeting was adjourned, but even before most of the parents got to the door, there was talk of starting petitions in support of Castaneda. As council members left the room they filed past a throng of parents who shouted at them: "Fraud! Fraud! Fraud!"

Many parents left the meeting feeling betrayed. The council had disregarded majority sentiment, and thus failed to represent them. Moreover, the LSC had not even sought a dialogue with their constituents prior to the vote, a time when parents and the LSC might talk over their views about the principal, rather than circling numbers on a survey form. The survey and closed meetings that the council held may have been a legal and efficient way for the council to conduct its business. In fact, Aguirre and Martinez insisted repeatedly to the broader parent groups that the activities of

the council were within the law, and that they had no reason to discuss with the public the grounds for their dissatisfaction with Castaneda. Thus, the council successfully dismissed the principal. Their victory seemed hollow, however, because by denying public discourse, they had squandered the good will and understanding of their constituents. Their actions generated suspicion and hostility instead.

The debate about Castaneda's non-retention spilled out into the broader community after the vote. Local city elections, including aldermanic elections, were scheduled to take place a month later, in February, 1991. Sprague's controversy attracted the attention of the candidates and their supporters, and aldermanic hopefuls began to show up at school meetings. They made a point of questioning the LSC about its unpopular decision. Their presence only added fuel to the fire.

To still other parents the chief culprit was CABA. These parents accused Martinez and Aguirre of using their role as representatives of CABA to manipulate the rest of the LSC. They were wary that CABA wanted to control the next principal. For instance, a mother asked the two community representatives: "Why don't you just admit that you don't want Mr. Castaneda because he is not your puppet? Why don't you just admit it?" One parent tested Martinez at a subsequent council meeting: "Every time you've introduced yourself, you've said that you are a member of CABA." The principal's brother, who was now a regular at all LSC meetings, also challenged: "At a meeting on February 19, you introduced yourself as a member of CABA--that was the very first thing you said." Both times, Martinez angrily denied that she had introduced herself in this manner. Still another parent asked LSC members, "Why do letters from the school mention CABA? CABA should have nothing to do with this school."

Parents also raised suspicions about the money that CABA had received from a Chicago bank

during the first year of reform. For example, a father complained,

> Why is it that the council is making money from school reform? The council, and particularly CABA, has received money from banks downtown. The council was making money through this process.

In a private interview still another parent described,

> Well, all that you see is swine, you can call the... council...and for the simple fact that they are bound to the organization [CABA]...and because the Mayor had workers in the same organization...They knew how to cover up all these atrocities because there were people who protected them. So they went further. They laughed at the people. They laughed at the parents, and they trampled on the children. We would need to invent a new word because to say `swine' is not enough...We didn't want to mix politics and school...You know politics exists everywhere, but the truth is that we didn't want our children to be aware of the filth of politics inside school [translation].

Several of the parents who raised these questions were affiliated with the other parent organizations at Sprague, such as the PTO and the Father's Club. The council had made minimal effort to reach out to these long-standing organizations when it came time to decide on Castaneda's contract.

The link between CABA and the council garnered attention in the local media as well. At least two community newspapers featured articles about the council's decision.[40] In both cases, CABA was held culpable. One newspaper quoted a father who described the Sprague council as "a political organization." He charged that CABA, through Martinez, had politicized the council. An editorial appeared in another local paper supporting Castaneda and the parents. It said:

> Even if CABA is totally right and Mr. Castaneda is not sensitive enough to turn his office into another classroom, is it not a little pretentious on the part of CABA to meddle in the internal affairs of the schools? Who elected CABA to carry out that task? To whom is CABA accountable? As part of the Hispanic community, we do not remember giving CABA the power to tell school councils what to do.[41]

The local media maintained their scrutiny of the affairs at Sprague over the next several

months, and in general, the coverage portrayed CABA as paternalistic and self-righteous.[42] It is unclear why the neighborhood media took this hostile stance. Perhaps it wished to be perceived as representative of broader community sentiment.

In an effort to better understand the motivations of CABA's members on Sprague's council, we interviewed Martinez, and asked her specifically why she had opposed the renewal of Castaneda's contract. She told us that she was neutral toward Castaneda at first, but expressed great disappointment when she learned that he required written consent of parents before he would allow students to leave school early to attend their confirmation classes at nearby St. Joseph's Church. According to Martinez the former principal, McNamara, had handled this more informally, walking the children to church sometimes himself, or asking a teacher to accompany them there. Although Martinez acknowledged that Castaneda's procedure was probably one that the Board of Education required, as a Catholic school graduate herself and a former staff member at St. Joseph's, she felt that Castaneda had been insensitive to the needs of his families, and overly bureaucratic.

Interestingly, the Sprague case did not fit the profile of other schools that were embroiled in adversarial politics over the principals' contract during the first and second years of reform. In most other cases, race, ethnicity and/or language issues were involved. For example, all of the other principals in Sprague's neighborhood that were non-retained were white and non-Spanish speaking. While race and ethnicity were not stated as reasons for dismissal in these cases, limited ability--based on culture and language--to communicate effectively with parents, was.[43]

Because Sprague did not fit the citywide pattern, we cast about further for plausible explanations. Prior to the first round of LSC elections, newspaper columnists speculated that politically ambitious individuals might run for LSCs so as to test the political waters in their

neighborhoods. One reform journal indicated that 28 people who were on local school councils in 1991 had run for alderman in that year's election.[44] At least one upper grade Sprague teacher recognized this motivation as well stating, "I think there are a lot of people who are using reform as a stepping stone, maybe to some kind of...political office or something, or power in the community." Martinez could possibly qualify as such a candidate. After her first term on the Sprague LSC, she decided to run and won as a community representative for the LSC of the local high school.[45] Then, during the March 1992 Illinois Democratic Primary, she ran as a convention delegate for one of the presidential candidates. Similarly, Aguirre went on to become a staff member at CABA. He frequently was pictured in local newspapers, publicizing various activities of the CBO, and increasingly his name was being suggested as a potential aldermanic candidate. Thus, both individuals successfully used their connection with CABA to gain high profile roles in the community, and neither individual was far from the local limelight.

Also unresolved in all of this debate was any clarity about the CBO's motivations. What did CABA hope to gain from its contentious involvement with Sprague where it was perceived as opposing majority sentiment, rather than as a champion of the have-nots? We interviewed Teresa Coronado, one of the original founders of CABA, who had left the organization for both personal and ideological reasons during the mid-1980's. In 1989, when Chicago School Reform first passed, Coronado was involved with reform advocacy under the auspices of another CBO. Moreover, she was still regarded as one of the best Latino, Alinsky-style organizers in the city. Thus, we asked her to help us understand what the motives for CABA's involvement in schools might be. Admitting that she might not be the most neutral of respondents, she replied:

Well, they mess with people a lot. I'm consistently getting calls from people wanting

> me to go into CABA schools....That's the charge I hear all the time, `We're being manipulated.' I had a school where they did everything they could to destroy the principal there. I knew the guy. He wasn't a personal friend of mine, but I've known him for 25 years. Everyone was calling me saying, `This is so unfair. This is a good man, and he's done a lot of good work'...they did succeed in kind of throwing him out in shame and humiliation, and it just happened that I was working on the creation of another school, and he got the contract. He's very happy there, and they're happy with him. So that's the best that I could do, rather than get involved in the battle.

Later in the conversation, Ms. Coronado acknowledged that she was referring to Castaneda.

It was Coronado's contention that while CABA may have started as a champion of the have-nots, as soon as it developed neighborhood chapters in communities such as Sprague's, it lost touch with its original mission. She commented on the temptations that may have presented themselves to CABA as it changed from a local, grassroots organization to one with growing clout in City Hall. She explained how circumstances could lead organizations like CABA down a different path than that initially conceived by its founders.

> When an organization gets itself in trouble...it's when they decided they want to be the kingmakers. I think that's a line, a thin line when you get into this power organizing staff because I had a friend who worked for [former Mayor] Harold Washington who said to me one day, "You know, it's really rough working for the city." And I said, " Why?" And he said, "Because temptation walks in your door 10 times a day, and because you are in such a powerful position, people are willing to offer you anything you want. You've got to be a really strong personality. You've got to be clear about who you want to be, or you're going to get sucked in." And I think that happens to organizations too. CABA was on a roll,[46] and it was going to become something, and it was becoming something, and it had gained respect and recognition.

Many in the Sprague school community agreed with Coronado's assessment that CABA had lost touch with the "have-nots" and was not representing the interests of the community, but rather those from the outside. With funding, a citywide organization and affiliation with the Chicago School Reform Training Task Force, CABA was increasingly regarded as a new power-broker in the arena

of larger city politics.[47]

But the citywide image of CABA was not of immediate consequence to the warring factions at Sprague. With Castaneda a lame duck, and the search for a new principal begun, their all-consuming fight for power and control raged on. Increasingly their fight was understood locally as a simple battle between pro and anti-CABA forces.

The Search for a New Principal

A month after the decision on Castaneda's contract, the LSC created a principal selection committee. Their appointees included the pastor from St. Joseph's.[48] Parents in the audience complained about his appointment and he stepped down before the first meeting. Similarly, one mother asked, "Who picked the three parents on this committee? They are friends of the LSC, and they are always talking to them." Manuel Hernandez, a parent, commented that no one who supported Castaneda was represented on the committee. This was important to many of the parents because Castaneda had been asked to apply for his old position.[49] Without hesitation, Aguirre asked Hernandez to join the committee, and Hernandez accepted.[50] But he, like the pastor, resigned shortly thereafter.

Castaneda was not present at this meeting. Although his contract did not expire until July 1, he had stopped attending most council meetings since the vote. To protest his behavior, the council lodged an official complaint with the Board of Education. It asked that he be suspended because "he was not discharging his duties properly." The Board found no cause in the complaint. In his absence, Castaneda's supporters, as well as his brother, continued to badger the LSC relentlessly about its decision.

Meanwhile, the school advertised for a new principal and a process was developed to screen

applicants. The committee selected four finalists, but Castaneda was not one of them. A meeting was scheduled in the late spring for teachers and parents to meet the final four. Several parents and community residents, including Mike Castaneda, sat in the first few rows of the audience. They faced the LSC carrying placards which read:

> CABA No, Castaneda Si,
> CABA is politics, Castaneda is education,
> CABA out of Sprague School, and
> CABA is like a cockroach that is everyplace.

As the meeting started, the protesting parents shouted questions and comments from the floor whenever council members tried to speak. Margarita Acosta, the sub-district superintendent, was there, and she tried to restore order. To no avail she warned, "If people continue to be noisy, then the council will select a principal without input from the parents. You will not know who your next principal will be." Even the arrival of two city police officers did not dissuade the audience. Aguirre adjourned the meeting only moments after it had been called to order. One of the teacher representatives quietly informed staff that they could meet the principal candidates in a "Teachers Only" meeting being held at that time.

Three days later, on the Friday before the week-long spring break, a letter from the council addressed to the school's parents announced that a new principal, Mrs. Sylvia Ramirez, had been selected by unanimous vote. Ramirez was described as "a highly qualified individual with much experience in the field of education...among her experiences as an educator, she has taught for 10 years." Previous to her Sprague appointment, she had been a classroom teacher in another predominantly Latino school.

Few were pleased with the appointment. A group called "Concerned Parents of Sprague

Elementary" claimed to have collected $20,000 to hire an attorney to fight for Castaneda's re-instatement.[51] Manuel Hernandez was a key figure in this group. In an interview he explained: "I simply wanted to tell you that those of us who stood behind Mr. Castaneda did it without any other motive. . . We had no political interest." [translation] A lawsuit was filed, but it fizzled by the end of the school year. Once again, the parent community had little immediate recourse. After a spring LSC meeting, Fernando Diaz, the head of the Father's Club, said, "We need to vote out the council in October, and make sure that a responsible council is elected that will respond to the needs of parents and the community."

Changing Relations of Power

A New Principal. On July 1 Ramirez took over the principalship. She spent the summer familiarizing herself with her new job, and planning an opening day celebration that included a mariachi band and other festivities. Shortly thereafter, Governor Edgar selected Sprague as the school where he would sign amendments that had been added to the reform legislation. Several TV channels were present (Spanish language and the network affiliates).

The ceremony took place without incident and afterward the governor and his entourage went outside. They walked past the school band, and then past a row of silent parents holding picket signs. One sign read, "Get CABA out of Sprague". Another said, "School reform is destroying our school." A third said simply, "Sprague LSC out." Edgar did not acknowledge the protestors.

Following the governor's visit, Ramirez sent out a letter to parents regarding the historic event. She wrote:

> Of course, this would not have been possible if it weren't for our LOCAL SCHOOL COUNCIL who worked very hard to get him [the governor] to come here. My sincere thanks and gratitude goes to each one of them for creating such a special

moment for the Sprague School children (emphasis in the original).

Council elections were a month away.

The Second LSC. In contrast to much of the rest of the city where interest in LSC elections had declined from two years previous, Sprague's second LSC election was intense. It was described in the local media it as a "contest between pro- and anti-CABA candidates."[52] The anti-CABA slate pledged to represent their constituents. They promised that if they were elected, parents voices would be heard.[53] The campaigning on both sides was furious. A teacher commented:

> On the selection process of the LSC--the campaigning that was done around here, and the way the elections were held, and the fights before, after, and during them seemed to be as good as any aldermanic election in Chicago. So it was real depressing.

When the votes were counted, all five of the parent and community candidates who ran on the CABA sponsored slate, including Aguirre who ran for re-election, were defeated.[54] Hernandez was among the victors. In an interview he explained:

> They [the LSC] didn't count on the methods that the parents were going to use. The strategies and everything. They thought they were fighting a dormant Mexican people that used to exist. They didn't realize that the people were tired of being oppressed. And the people knew how to contain this anger until the day of the election when they would get their revenge. [translation]

Similarly Jose Miranda, a former sub-district advisory council chairman, and a community organizer in Sprague's neighborhood surmised:

> They [CABA members on the LSC] underestimated the power of the parents...People can only take so much...if you're vested with certain authority, then you have certain responsibility. But part of the responsibility is you have to be accountable to those who elected you. It's a basic concept of democracy.

The differences between the first and second LSC did not end with their views about democracy and CABA, however. Their background experiences were different as well. While

members of the first LSC had been influenced by CABA, several members of the second council were leaders in their block clubs. Others had been involved in various activities of the school; for example, the Fathers' Club and PTO. Most importantly, the new LSC was perceived by parents as supporters of the school. Thus the election signaled a complete changing of the guard. It heralded a total collapse of CABA's influence in the school, and called into question Ramirez's support on the council. The election report in El Imparcial concluded with the following, "The Sprague principal, observing the election, looked disconsolate. After all, community rejection of council members who hired her might be interpreted as a rejection of her."

A Principal who Self-Destructs

The format of LSC meetings changed as soon as the new members took their seats. Mindful of their campaign commitment to ensure that their constituents' voices would be heard, the LSC encouraged the audience to ask questions and comments at any time during the meeting. Public participation at the end of the meeting became a time when audience members could raise new issues and concerns. Second, the council sought to minimize the use of executive session. On those occasions when the LSC did need to meet behind closed doors to discuss personnel issues, the new chair, Ramon Salinas, apologized profusely to the audience.

The first substantive meeting of the LSC took place in November[55] and it set the tone for the rest of the school year. Surprisingly, council representatives and members of the broader parent community did not attack Ramirez on political grounds. They did not even raise questions about whether or not she was aligned with CABA. Rather their questions and comments were concerned with problems at the school, and also finding out about the new principal's priorities and leadership abilities. One question was "Why have so many bilingual teachers left?" Ramirez

avoided the issue, saying that personnel matters could not be addressed in public meetings. Parents also complained that Ramirez was never available to talk to them, the same complaint that had been made about Castaneda:

> Why aren't you more available in your office to talk with parents? I am always told that you are in meetings, many times outside of school. I want to talk to you about Sprague teachers, many of whom are falling asleep in their classrooms.

While Ramirez's lack of availability was frequently criticized, no parent questioned the principal about her office space. Over the summer she moved into a smaller room, thus permitting Castaneda's old office to be converted into a classroom.

Even when she was not defending against their questions and challenges, Ramirez was a timid voice during council meetings. She was reactive, rather than pro-active, and this, combined with the fact that she was often unprepared, contributed to a growing impression that she was overwhelmed. For instance, much of the December LSC meeting was spent discussing a State Chapter 1 proposal which was presented to the council by a teacher. When there was a question about the dollar amount that was actually available, neither Ramirez nor the teacher knew the exact figure. The LSC agreed to send the proposal back to committee, but many left the meeting wondering if Ramirez was sufficiently in control.

Similarly, at a later council meeting, the PPAC chair was asked to share with the LSC the committee's recommendation on four different academic programs that the council would be voting on. One of the four had been suggested to the PPAC by the principal. When the PPAC took its straw poll, only one failed to receive the PPAC's endorsement--the one proposed by Ramirez.[56]

In addition to the PPAC chair, many teachers made it a habit to come to council meetings

to express their concerns. This was especially true in the spring when the School Improvement Plan (SIP) was being developed.[57] Teachers complained that their suggestions and recommendations had not been included in the draft document prepared for the council. By this time, concern about Ramirez's ability was so widespread that several council members had called the sub-district and central offices for assistance and intervention. Administrators from these offices were a familiar presence at meetings to advise the council and the principal on how to proceed, particularly with regard to the SIP. At one such meeting, the assistant principal expressed her frustration: "There are positions in the SIP that do not exist [in the budget], like school community representatives.[58] There are references to Effective Schools and Project CANAL, both of which are not here at Sprague."[59] A troubleshooter from the CPS Office of Reform Implementation took over at this point. He outlined for Ramirez how she should have handled the development of the SIP from the start:

> Teachers should have been meeting on the SIP beginning in January...It's clear that not all the parts of the SIP are in this current draft. That is why I am sending you back to work on this document this week. . .Teachers may have already given their input, but not all of the teachers' recommendations are in the SIP...The whole staff needs to work on the SIP. I will call the district superintendent to ask for an extension until next Monday. The LSC should meet that day to approve the SIP. (To Ramirez) You need to call a meeting of all the teachers, and ask the staff to address the different goals in the SIP, unless you have a better suggestion.[60]

Salinas reinforced this statement by saying: "I want all the teachers to work on the SIP."

Two more meetings were held in May before the SIP was eventually approved. At one of these meetings, perhaps the greatest source of embarrassment for Ramirez was that teachers, once again, publicly disagreed with her. Initially, the principal informed the council that a clear majority of Sprague teachers had signed off on the newly revised SIP:

> All of the teachers have met. About 60 teachers signed off on the SIP saying that no further changes were needed. Nineteen teachers had stated that there should be some revisions and changes. Those changes were incorporated.

When asked by the chair if all the teachers had a copy of the SIP, Ramirez replied, "Yes." At this point, the union representative, an upper grade teacher, challenged: "Many of the teachers have not seen it." Chagrined, Ramirez admitted that she was referring to the original SIP, and not the revised document. The LSC chair then directed Ramirez to make sure that everyone received the right copy the next day. Two days later the council approved the SIP.

In interviews, teachers and council members also criticized Ramirez's performance. Like Castaneda, Ramirez was hampered by the size of her school. Her ineffectiveness seemed exacerbated by her lack of administrative experience. One of the teacher representatives said:

> I felt like we should've never gotten a principal that has never been a principal before...It is really difficult to become an administrator to 1500 people when you haven't had the experience. At least an assistant principal for a couple of years would have had some idea.

One of the parent council members felt that Mrs. Ramirez was not taking her job seriously. This mother pointed to the fact that Ramirez had mariachis on the opening day of school, and appeared to be more enthusiastic about organizing monthly fiestas and dances, rather than focusing on the school's academic program. Another LSC teacher representative became concerned, not only that Ramirez was unavailable, but that she was a weak administrator. She insisted that Ramirez was mentally unstable as well:

> In the past two weeks, I've made seven appointments to see her and she has kept not one. So, I don't have any type of rapport with her at all. And as a council member...I can't talk to her...It looks like I am going to have to file a grievance to even get to see her. That's bad PR for the school, for the teachers, for the union...She seems very paranoid to me...real paranoid about everything. And I said, `Well, I guess it goes along with being a new principal.' But for six months?

> You still don't know anyone you can trust. And it makes a very unhappy atmosphere...she is not showing any administrative qualities...we're constantly being threatened that `I'll write you up. I'll write you up...If you breathe loud, I'll write you up.'

Frustrations with Ramirez mounted. At a council meeting a mother asked Ramirez if she had been aware of the problems at Sprague prior to her arrival. Ramirez replied:

> I didn't know there were any problems at this school until I came to the candidates' night and saw all the people protesting. I am never given a chance to work. I get attacked all the time, even when I am trying to leave the school building.

In an interview that was conducted half-way through the school year, Salinas insisted that when he had started his tenure as chair, he was willing to ignore the fact that Ramirez had been brought in by the CABA council and give her "the benefit of the doubt." He changed his stance over the first few months, however, because she refused to cooperate and work with the council:

> Then I would be very satisfied with her, and I wouldn't bother her. But the way she does things, I don't think she is going to do that. . .She is not competent. She makes a lot of mistakes. She lies a lot. She doesn't speak the truth...and she is manipulated by someone, and in that aspect I think that it is CABA...Mr. Aguirre [the first LSC community representative] is there [at the school] every day. He goes and talks to three, four teachers and the principal. What do they talk about every day? [translation]

Ramirez was surprised and hurt by these attacks. She argued that she was not aligned with anyone. She once told us, "I'm politically neutral. I've never been political. My main issue is the kids. . .People accuse me of being affiliated with CABA, but that is not true."

Parents began asking when the council would evaluate their new principal.[61] A father told the LSC:

> First, I want to thank the council for all of the work that they have done for this school, beginning with getting rid of that political organization [CABA]. I would like to know what evaluation of Sylvia Ramirez has been done by the council. I think the school is getting worse...You know, the previous council had said they

wanted to hire someone who had at least five years of administrative experience. Parents were told that the council needed to complete the principal evaluation by May 15, a deadline established by the Board of Education. They missed the deadline, but shortly thereafter, they discussed their findings in a closed executive session--a meeting which both the sub-district superintendent and the central office administrator attended. The council then scheduled a special public meeting in early June to report to the school community. Ramirez did not attend. A motion was made and passed to send a written evaluation to the principal. But Hernandez short-circuited this process when he offered: "I make a motion that the council ask Mrs. Sylvia Ramirez to step down as principal." The motion was greeted by applause and it was unanimously approved. On that point, and for the first time in a long time, there appeared to be a consensus of opinion in the Sprague school community.

Ramirez resigned before school opened in the fall. An acting principal was appointed, and the LSC immediately set about the process of recruiting a new administrator.[62] The Sprague school community had spent the first three years of reform fighting about power and control. This battle had maintained itself despite a change in the principalship and a complete turn-over of the LSC. It was exacerbated by Ramirez's ineptness. The combination of adversarial politics and a principal who self-destructed had prevented the school community from substantively discussing school improvement issues and/or students' needs for another year.

On opening day of the 1992 - 1993 school year, the question on everyone's mind was what would happen now that the first council and the principal that they had hired were gone? Had the people gotten their full "revenge?" Could the LSC find a competent principal who was willing to take charge of such a fractious school? Would the school ever be able to focus its attention on

the goals of reform?

An End to Adversarial Politics:

The Third Principal and Third LSC

In December of 1992, Sprague's LSC hired Daniel Swenson, a former principal at another Chicago elementary school.[63] Swenson was middle-aged, white, and he had only a minimal command of Spanish. His selection was surprising, given the high premium that past councils had placed on having an administrator who was both Latino and bilingual. Some people in the community suggested that following the debacle with Ramirez, the most important selection criteria was to find someone with experience in the principalship. The former district advisory chair, Jose Miranda, offered another hypothesis:

> Because they went through two Latino principals - the one they wanted [Castaneda], wasn't able to stay. And the second one [Ramirez]...they didn't want her to stay, period. They probably went through the process saying, `Well, maybe this time we could be better off with somebody who was not Mexican.' I was a little surprised, but not totally surprised...I think Mexicans have a certain characteristic, more cultural than anything else. I think it's more prevalent among Mexicans than among a lot of others. There's more of this sense of what we call "malinchismo," meaning the preference of the foreign, or of the outsider to one of their own...Greater numbers of Mexicans are more willing to accept someone who is not Mexican to either be their principal, be their supervisor, be their boss, even though the majority of them are Mexican...I think it's a little more common among Mexicans because of Mexico's history, and because by and large Mexicans have not been in charge of a number of things in their own country...And because of being so close to the United States, it creates a complex among Mexicans about the U.S...There's a certain complex, inferior complex that Mexicans have because of geography and history.

From the start, Swenson was a pro-active leader, and so a stark contrast to Mrs. Ramirez. He was described by a former parent council representative as a "serious man," who "wanted to

get down to business," and was not afraid to risk controversy and debate to get things done. Under his leadership both the SIP and accompanying budget were approved on time. Moreover, both documents were developed with input from both the council and staff. Swenson also demonstrated a willingness to learn Spanish, and so at each LSC meeting he would painstakingly translate key sections of his principal's report. Even though his Spanish was halting and grammatically incorrect, the council and audience encouraged his effort.

While Swenson may have been a strong presence at council meetings, the LSC had not become his rubber stamp. There was extensive debate, and a full airing of contested issues--even if that meant risking a split between teachers and parents. For example, in the late spring, the council considered whether or not to expand the school's parking lot. Money for the project would come from the sub-district engineer's budget, not the school's capital improvement funds, but many parents and community members were concerned that the change would reduce the school's already insufficient recreational area. They insisted that there were more pressing physical improvement needs at the school. One of the community representatives stated:

> Why don't the teachers want to walk a bit more if they need to park a little farther away from the school? Parking spaces are not part of the teachers' contract, but teachers get lots of other benefits. There's plenty of room for parking on the street. Are the teachers afraid to walk the streets of the neighborhood to get to school? The teachers work for us. They work for the community. I don't want to lose land for our children just to expand the parking lot for them.

Teachers fought back. They said that the parking lot was so overcrowded that emergency vehicles would have difficulty getting onto school grounds if the need arose. The matter was debated at length, and eventually the expansion was approved by a vote of 7 to 3. Swenson, the two teacher representatives, and some of the parent members on the council voted in favor.

Sprague's Third LSC: Continuity and Consistency

In October, 1993 a third set of council elections took place. Only two people from the second council ran for re-election; Hernandez and a community representative, Olga Rodriguez.[64]

The specter of CABA loomed large in the campaign even though the CBO had been essentially exorcised two years previous. Several candidates took it upon themselves to remind the school community about what CABA had done, and the need to keep CABA out of the school. For example, there were allegations that Rodriguez had secretly become aligned with CABA during her term on the second council. Without naming names, Hernandez took it upon himself at a council meeting to caution the audience:

> Don't put on the council any negative members, or someone who may be misguided. We do not want a repeat of when Mr. Ricardo Castaneda was forced out of school, and we were forced to waste a lot of time with the following administration...What I advise you is to look at who are the political figures who are organizing people who are running for the council.

An outgoing parent member was even more direct in her advise to the voters:

> I want to encourage people to run for the LSC. We all fought CABA...CABA has destroyed schools. They've destroyed schools in one year. They don't even need two years to destroy a school. Please do not allow CABA to be elected to the Local School Council.

Not all of the campaigning was negative, however. Four of the candidates (including Hernandez) were block club members. In their comments and nomination statements at the candidates' forum they all highlighted this experience. All of these candidates were elected, while Rodriguez was not. Thus, similar to the second council, the third LSC had significant social resources internally, established ties to the broader parent community, and relevant organizing skills. Most importantly, the third LSC, like the second, considered itself supportive of the school

and its staff.

At the first organizational meeting Anita Baez was elected chair. She was not a typical chair in that she was female (all of her predecessors had been male), Puerto Rican rather than Mexican, and she had two advanced degrees--one in nursing and another in medicine. She had been involved in the school for a long time as a classroom volunteer, and she had run unsuccessfully for the council in the past. Swenson congratulated the new council on the election at this first meeting. He said that he looked forward to working closely with them to improve the school.

Just as he had negotiated successfully between his parents and faculty around the parking lot renovation, Swenson also proved strategic when it came to external politics; whether it was recognizing the community's sensitivities toward CABA, or confronting the central office and other agencies about long-standing issues that parents and the school community had been unable to resolve on their own. With regard to CABA, Baez recounted a conversation where she tried to convince the principal to support an after-school, parent-child program sponsored by a CBO. It was offered free-of-charge if the school could provide a room and recruit families. Swenson suggested that the program sounded good, but that when Baez advertised it, she needed to be clear that while it was sponsored by a CBO, the CBO was not CABA.

With regard to external agencies, Sprague's LSC had been battling with the city's Public Building Commission to renovate several rooms, but for some reason the Commission was stalling the project's completion. Their delay meant that two classrooms were forced to meet all year in an isolated and ill-equipped fieldhouse.

As soon as he was appraised of this situation, Swenson strategized. He encouraged his

council members to go with him to meetings of the Public Buildings Commission and also the Board of Education. He helped them to prepare testimony for these meetings that described the deplorable conditions at Sprague, and the need for the Commission to act quickly on the students' behalf. He also suggested that council members write personal follow-up letters--to Commission and Board members, relevant politicians, and the press--and again Swenson offered his assistance with this task. Swenson initiated and guided all of these activities, but he strategically stayed out of the public eye. He wisely surmised that under reform, LSC members potentially wielded more power in such arenas than principals. It did not take long for Sprague's LSC to understand and appreciate these tactics. They worked in tandem with Swenson to get things done.

Swenson also encouraged Baez to establish three standing committees, including one on instruction and curriculum. While these committees routinely reported at monthly council meetings, their membership was minimal and they were not pro-active. Rather, it was Swenson who engaged the faculty and catalyzed the first academic initiatives. For example, shortly after Swenson started his term, the faculty examined a new whole language reading series which was subsequently recommended to the council. In her presentation to the council, the LSC teacher representative described it as an "interesting, literature-based methodology" which represented a change from the drill and skill approach which had previously been used at Sprague. Swenson also worked with his faculty and the LSC both to understand and support major changes he proposed to the SIP. These included "more emphasis on cooperative learning and peer tutoring, and the importance of heterogeneous grouping, that is, not grouping children by ability."

Baez was complimentary of Swenson, describing him as a "wonderful principal." Her major concern was not about him, but for him, in that she perceived friction between him and

some of the faculty. Neither Castaneda nor Ramirez had ever pressed teachers for significant changes to their daily routines, and, not surprisingly, there was a significant sub-group on the faculty that was quite comfortable with the status quo. Thus, when Swenson demanded that certain lax practices end, teachers were outraged. Baez told us:

> I'm trying to make him [Swenson] realize, you know, you're new...you're coming to a place that everybody has been there for twenty, twenty-five years...He stopped many things that the teachers were feeling good about...He stopped all that. `Eight-thirty for [faculty] meetings with me or PPAC or whatever. You sign [in at the office]. You go directly to the meeting. After that, you go straight to your room. No coffee. There's no coffee break.'

Similarly, Juan Alvarez, an LSC teacher representative and a member of the principal's selection committee that interviewed and recommended Swenson, stated that over-all teacher morale dropped once Swenson began to make his presence and priorities known. But Alvarez said that he and some other teachers were enthusiastic that they finally had a principal who was willing to lead change. At an LSC meeting Alvarez told parents:

> A lot of people have exerted leadership here at the school, and we need to continue to have a strong leader, who sometimes may not be that popular. When I brought in Mr. Swenson, it was not because he was American or Mexican or Chinese. I thought he was the best qualified individual for the job...Please support our principal who has worked so hard.

Five years after the passage of reform the Sprague school community finally had a principal who had some support in both the parent group and faculty to begin to work on issues of school improvement.

Analyzing the Unfolding of School Community Politics at Sprague:

A Story of Darkness or Light?

What are the lessons here? On the one hand, if, as noted earlier, politics such as those which debilitated the Sprague school community for three full years are estimated to engulf less than 10% of the city's schools, then maybe it is just as well to ignore these adversarial cases. While they are deeply troubling, they are also few in number.[65] On the other hand, Sprague's long story may be viewed a victory for democratic localism that is especially important because it crosses chasms of role, ethnicity, and class. If so, then it seems warranted, as we have done, first to chronicle and now to analyze the specific resources, conditions and events in this local school community that enabled a transition from such a long period of darkness, to a higher ground.

School Community Context Revisited

An important point about the Sprague school community is that it is a vital one. Residents are immigrant and poor, but a majority are employed, and they support a viable economic strip. Housing is overcrowded, but that seems better than many urban neighborhoods where the housing stock is blighted and abandoned. A network of Catholic Churches is thriving, as are extended families. There is a smattering of community-based organizations, several of which are long-standing. Local elections are hotly contested in the ward--a struggle between old-style machine candidates and independents who represent a more progressive agenda. This too brings energy, organization and resources to the neighborhood. Most importantly, while residents are troubled by the encroachment of gangs, they are not paralyzed by them. Rather, they are fighting back: actively organizing block clubs, graffiti clean-ups, and many structured activities for youth to try to keep them out of gangs. Thus, the Sprague school community may be poor, but it is not without strong social resources.

These social resources are of two main types. The first tend to be highly regimented, and

top-down. Included here are the youth gangs, machine politics, the institutional Catholic Church, and CBOs like CABA. Each of these institutions are felt to be paternalistic and/or authoritarian by many of the local residents. They help to organize life for community residents, but leave little room for personal discretion about the conduct of daily activities.[66]

The foil to this paternalism, however, is also apparent in the Sprague community. A second type of social resource exists in the networks of informal block clubs, extended families, grass-roots independent politics, and parent organizations of the school that bring residents into a different kind of relationships with each other, with their school, and their community. These relationships are not especially hierarchical nor highly regimented. Rather, they structure many informal opportunities for people to define and then work together on issues of common concern. In spite of the high mobility of a neighborhood like Sprague's, such social institutions enable a core of people to get to know each other. Over time members of this core may establish trusting and enduring relationships that bring a different kind of organization, resource and vitality to the local community.[67]

At the start of reform, however, it was a paternalistic type of control that was dominant in the school. The pre-reform principal, McNamara, for example, was remembered as a strong and benevolent father figure. He had developed positive social relations with his faculty. He was also credited with starting and/or supporting the many parent groups that were active at the school, and the walks that he took with the children to their catechism classes at St Joseph's were legendary in some circles. When McNamara suddenly dies, Castaneda inherits much of the good will that his predecessor had generated.

While Castaneda may have been well-liked, he was not the strong, father figure that

McNamara was. Rather, he was regarded as a weak leader in a huge and chaotic school. Consequently, he was vulnerable. Moreover, the faculty was not held accountable--either by Castaneda or the local community. Some teachers apparently were coming late to class, going on extended coffee breaks: in short, "doing their own thing." Thus, at the start of reform both the principal and the faculty were weak.[68]

In fact, the only group activated by the passage of reform was the parent community. CABA made the first move. Their actions against Castaneda served as a wake-up call to the broader parent community, which organized aggressively in response. While the parent and community group became deeply divided, it was still the only site of power in the school community which had mobilized at all during the first several years of reform.

A Story of Darkness

In some ways the events at Sprague during the early implementation of school reform confirm what many in Chicago and elsewhere most feared: PA 85-1418 might usher the anti-professional and potentially racist politics of the neighborhoods directly into the local schools. One of the great fears about Chicago school reform was that it would be ripe for take-over by petty political interests more concerned with advancing themselves and their organizations than educating children.

Arguably this may be the story of the second year of reform at Sprague. In this instance, CABA, a community-based organization with historical ties to Alinsky, targeted a huge, Latino school, and took control of the Local School Council. The council never brought up issues of school improvement, teaching and learning. Rather, it fired the sitting principal, even though he was bilingual and Latino. Moreover, the council did this with only superficial input from the local

community, and it never adequately explained to the broader parent and community group why their principal should be "non-retained." They then hired an inexperienced principal, who proved to be inept.

When accused by their constituents of orchestrating a hostile take-over, Martinez and Aguirre, the two community representatives with the strongest ties to CABA and most active on the LSC, cited the law and insisted that their behavior was not only legal, but "democratic." Duly elected for a two year period, they had the power to act without regard to the wishes of their constituents, and without a need to justify or even communicate the reasons for their decisions in an open forum. They held some of their discussions in closed session, and they voted on the principal's contract as they pleased.

At the end of the first two years of reform, this school community was mired in an all-consuming "war" over power and control, and it looked like the critics of Chicago school reform were proving their case. In a huge, overcrowded school, where student achievement was low, there had been virtually no substantive public discussion--on the LSC, in the faculty or within the broader community--about students and their education and/or the school and its improvement.

A Story of Light

Judged from other perspectives, however, and the advantage of a longer time frame, the Sprague case heralds a victory of Chicago school reform and possibly of "democratic localism" more generally. Parents, community members and teachers, who at the outset of reform had little knowledge of or interest in either CABA or the Chicago School Reform Act, soon educated themselves about both. Offended by the "arrogant" and "disrespectful" tactics that were being used by CABA representatives against "their principal," they came to reject the organization.

Individual members were accused of trampling on the people to bring in their "own puppet" principal whom they might control. More generally, the organization was accused of losing sight of its founding mission to champion the rights of the "have-nots." They charged that it had gotten rich off of school reform and come to represent external interests--those of City Hall--rather than their own.

Teachers, parents and community members also became interested in the law. While some questioned the wisdom of empowering an LSC to make decisions about the principal, they chose to work within a legal framework, and learned that they had no recourse but to wait for the next LSC elections. That would be their time to retaliate. The parents organized for this election and used some of the very same tactics that the CBO had previously employed. They organized their own slate, and mounted an energetic grass-roots effort. Moreover, when these individuals campaigned, they took great pains to explain to the community who they were, what their affiliations were to neighborhood block clubs and parent organizations, and why they thought there needed to be a changing of the guard at the school.

Once elected, this second LSC tried to work with Ramirez, and focus on issues of school improvement. When she did not work out, they recruited a principal whom they thought had the experience to improve the school. They also showed concern for the LSC that would replace them. At the end of their two year term, for example, Hernandez ran for re-election and won a second term. He and other members of the second council also encouraged people from their block clubs and parent organizations to run, and in so doing ensured that individuals with similar resources, priorities, and standing in the community would succeed them. Equally important, individuals like Rodriguez with suspected ties to CABA were targeted and beaten. Thus, rather

than upsetting the fragile political dynamics of the school, the election of the third council contributed to a sense of continuity and stability that it desperately needed.

Defining Local Democracy

The politics in the Sprague school community defy simple analysis. At one level the school community was enacting "real Chicago politics. . .so it was real depressing." At another level, however, the community seemed to be struggling with an enduring and underlying tension in American government; a battle between direct, citizen participation, and representation.[69] Ironically, this battle to define local democracy is taking place in an immigrant community where few of the residents have enough experience with democratic government to take its promises for granted. Equally ironic is the fact that at Sprague it is the LSC that is accused of denying parents their voice, even though the architects of reform deliberately designed these councils to empower them. Noteworthy too is the fact that it is a community-based organization, which regards itself as a champion of the "have-nots," that at Sprague is accused of betraying them. Moreover, the parents who clamor to be heard, have no known previous involvement in governance activity. Rather, their ties are to blockclubs and longstanding school-based parent organizations that have been seen as a social support and resource to the professional educators of the school.

Perhaps most importantly, it can be argued that the Sprague school community eventually and successfully bridged the gap of hostility and alienation that so often divides poor, urban parents from school professionals. Once Swenson was hired, the LSC (both the second and third) opened up a conversation with him, and actively sought his advice and counsel. They disagreed with him on occasion (for example, the extension of the parking lot). But they also respected his expertise and were willing to be guided by him (literally--to meetings of the Public Buildings

Commission), once they realized that his interest--school improvement--was the same as their own.

The Pivotal Politics of the Second LSC

In both word and deed, then, the second LSC proves that they wanted an experienced administrator that they could work with and trust. Their behavior is noteworthy for three reasons.

First, their ability to use different political strategies--aggressively organizing against the first LSC, but demonstrating a willingness to be cooperative with their principals--speaks to a sophisticated politics that is not based on self-interest or aggrandizement, nor one that pits professionals against nonprofessionals. Rather it stems from a desire for school improvement. Further, it suggests a flexibility of political strategies, that seems surprisingly sophisticated in such a young organization.[70] The successful strategizing of the second LSC seems based on the strength of their community and social ties. These individuals organized during the second LSC election to push CABA out. Next they organized to bring in a principal who they thought had the seriousness of purpose and experience to advance an agenda of educational improvement. They then remained vigilant during the third election to keep CABA out. Since they had so little previous governance experience to guide them, it is surely the strength of their social ties that were key to the vitality of these efforts.

Second, the actions of the second LSC serve as a "check" on the political excesses of the first one. When they get rid of the first council and then Ramirez, they are righting wrongs and seeking to bring the school to a stable, functional state. In so doing, the second LSC seems to exemplify the system of "checks and balances" hypothesized in Rodriguez's research on parent involvement in ESEA Title VII Advisory Councils, but never identified in his field research.

Finally, the second LSC can be credited with diminishing the politics of ethnicity in their school community. In this instance Sprague again represents an atypical case, since at the start of reform the school had one of a very few bilingual, Mexican-American principals in the district. Moreover, it was a Mexican LSC that fired him. There is, however, a subtle ethnic politics evident in the community once McNamara dies. It is expressed as a generally held desire that the principal of a Latino school (and especially one of the largest in the district) be Latino and bilingual. But after Castaneda was fired, and Ramirez proved incompetent, parents and community members came to recognize that hiring a seasoned administrator might be more important for their school than finding one who would serve as an ethnic symbol.

Re-defining Relations of Power: Making a Transition from Adversarial Politics

When the period of this research was ending, the third LSC and the third principal were establishing new working relations. These relations were not based on a commonality of class, ethnicity or culture. Rather, they seemed grounded in a burgeoning trust, a growing respect for the expertise and good intentions of the other site of power, and a common agenda of improving the school. Not surprisingly, the first shared initiatives of Swenson and the council focused on basic issues like repairing the building and involving more adults in security issues at the school.[71]

Moreover, with the encouragement of his LSC and support from a handful of teachers like Alvarez, Swenson was beginning to serve notice on the faculty that "business as usual" would no longer be tolerated. In addition to cracking down on their lax practices, Swenson was initiating conversations with his faculty about issues of heterogeneous grouping, whole language curricula, and cooperative learning. At this early stage Swenson was doing no more than putting some ideas on the table; grist for the mill in a faculty that was not used to analyzing their practice, much

less seeking to improve it. These initial conversations about teaching, in combination with establishing standard operating procedures (like showing up to class on time), had the desired effect of lighting a fire under a complacent faculty.[72] These activities did not make Swenson popular with a majority of his teachers. Nevertheless, he decided to use his authority as principal to try to activate the faculty to become involved in the school's improvement and accountable to its community.[73]

In the spring of 1994 it was too early to tell what kind of politics the Sprague school community was moving toward. It was not even clear if the Sprague school community was better or worse off as a result of Chicago school reform. Clearly, reform had ushered in a long and difficult period; a war over power and control. But this battle also energized the broader parent community, catalyzed their social resources, and focused their attention on issues of school improvement. Five years after the passage of reform Sprague had an activist principal, a supportive council and broader parent community, and a newly roused faculty. There was cause for hope.

Notes

1.Bryk et al, 1993.

2.Sprague School has been given a pseudonym and details about the school and community have been masked to preserve its anonymity. In all other respects, this case is specific to a Chicago school community.

3.The terms Latino and Hispanic are used inter-changeably to refer to people of Latin American heritage. In general, however, the latter term is more commonly used; for example, it is the term used in the U.S. Census.

4.Mexican/Mexican American refers to the following: Students born in Mexico who are now in the U.S.; students who were born in the U.S. but whose Mexican parents have recently immigrated; or Mexican-descent students who are first, second or third generation in this country.

5.A notable exception is A View of the Elementary Schools: The State of Reform in Chicago. Bryk et al (1993) break out Latino schools for some of their survey analyses, and several of the case study schools examined by the Center and the Panel are racially isolated, Hispanic schools.

6.Meier & Stewart, 1991.

7.In most neighborhood schools the boundaries are equivalent to about 4 or 5 precincts, an area at least one-sixth or one-seventh the size of a Chicago ward.

8. Title VII is part of the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, a spin-off of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Title VII monies initially were used to fund a majority of specialized instructional services provided to limited-English-proficient (LEP) students. However, as some states began to provide their own bilingual and ESL services to LEP students, Title VII funds were then used to enhance and supplement instructional services above and beyond what local and state education agencies furnished.

9.See 1975 United States Commission on Civil Rights Report of Bilingual Programs, p. 101.

10.For example, Massachusetts mandated bilingual education in 1971.

11.Milan, 1982; Ovander & Collier, 1985.

12.This was the case even though it was often the local community that had campaigned for the installation of bilingual programs in the first place.

13.See Rodriguez (1979).

14.This classification was based on a continuum of activity originally developed by the Recruitment and Leadership Institute (RLTI) at Temple University. Rodriguez (1979) contends that one drawback of the system, is that it does not allow for any analysis of either cultural values or attitudes held by individuals, both of which are critical in shaping and determining political behaviro.

The different participatory levels, as developed by RLTI, are the following:

1) Placation role -

School officials allow parents and community residents to make the least number of decisions necessary to keep the "noise" level down. The "noise" may come from different sources such as the federal government or state agencies.

2) Sanctions role -

Persons, particularly those who are widely visible in the community, voice their approval regarding school goals which have already been developed by school officials. Generally these people are selected by school personnel.

3) Information -

School officials come together with persons or groups who may have useful information for when school programs are being designed and implemented, such as in developing the needs assessment of a program, or when establishing what components should be included or avoided in a program.

4) Checks and Balances -

Providing people with some inquiry, or veto powers regarding programs where they have an interest. This requires that information be exchanged in both directions between school officials and citizens. Also at this level citizens can vote up or down certain programmatic decisions.

5) Change Agent -

At this level. it is expected that individuals and situations will change over a period of time. These changes must be based on goals established and developed by the people themselves. In this model, people have "negative power" which prevents actions from taking place, as well as "forward motion power" which promotes and encourages different activities.

15.Goldenberg (1993:229-230), Delgaido-Gaitan (1991).

16.Delgaido-Gaitan (1990; 1991).

17.The area was basically uninhabited prior to the 1900s.

18. When Washington won the office of Mayor in 1983, a key political Latino ally of his, Rudy Lozano, was running for alderman in the Sprague community. Lozano did not win the position, and he was assassinated shortly after Washington's mayoral victory. His death served to galvanize this Mexican community, and he "soon became a martyr for the local independent political movement." (Casuso and Camacho, 1985:9) Later other Lozano and Washington supporters went on to win political office.

19.See Wong & Rollow, 1990. See also Bryk et al in press.

20.Jovarsky, 1990a.

21.Alinsky had gotten his start in Chicago's Back of the Yards community in the fifties. He often organized through the Catholic Church. He focused on the need to empower the "have-nots" who lived in the white, immigrant, working class neighborhoods to demand their fair share from the "haves" who ran the city. Often Alinsky's tactics were adversarial. For example, he and his organizers would personalize the "enemy" and invite an important figure in the city, such as the

Mayor, School Superintendent, or Chief of Police to attend a community function. There he would present the individual with a list of community demands, and hope publically to extract promises for change. Another tactic was to concentrate on short-term, tangible victories that would bring people into the organization and sustain their involvement.

22. Organizations involved in recruiting and training candidates for the 1989 LSC elections included Designs for Change, Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE), and Aspira of Illinois as well as UNO. They formed the Chicago School Reform Training Task Force and published a manual titled Kids First: Leadership Guide for School Reform (1989). It was published in English and Spanish and used for training throughout the city.

23.86% of Chicago schools were below national norms at the advent of reform. See Bryk, et al, 1993.

24. Kids First, 1989, p. 34.

25.CABA is a pseudonym.

26.Gorov, 1990a; Joravsky, 1990a. The philanthropic community in Chicago chose to fund CBOs to continue their advocacy of school reform, rather than churches.

27.Joravsky, 1990a, p.13.

28.The Local School Improvement Council was an advisory group that preceded LSCs. Prior to reform when a new principal was to be selected, the LSIC could read applications, interview candidates, and make recommendations to the sub-district superintendent. It was the sub-district superintendent who made the final decision.

29.Ball, 1987.

30. Sprague is similar in size to a Chicago high school where there are typically three freed assistant principals.

31.For further discussion of how reform changed the principalship in Chicago, see Bryk et al 1993.

32. Based on Sprague's 1992 School Report Card, test results on the IGAP (Illinois Goals Assessment Program) and the ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills) are similar to other schools in the subdistrict. Sprague's scores are low when compared to other schools in the CPS, and drop even lower relative to statewide averages.

33.The Bilingual Advisory Council was also plagued by turn-over in membership as children left the program.

34.See Rodriguez (1979) and Ovando and Collier (1985), cited earlier.

35.The school reform legislation called for half of Chicago's local school councils to hire or fire their principals during reform's first year, and the other half to do so during reform's second year. Schools

were randomly assigned to the first or second year.

36.They reported attending trainings conducted by Designs for Change, UNO, The Chicago Panel on Public School Finances as well as their sub-district office.

37. Although many trainers recommended steps that a council could undertake in order to evaluate a principal, and also evaluation criteria, there was no specified course of action from either the Board of Education or the State of Illinois.

By law LSCs were obligated to go into executive session when discussing specific personnel matters, although the final vote must be public. Discussion regarding evaluation criteria would not necessitate an executive session.

38. Eighty parents at a school with 1500 students may not seem to be that many. In comparison to other LSC meetings observed by Center for School Improvement staff, however, this number appears to be quite high.

39. The two teachers in the council also voted not to retain Mr. Castaneda. One was John Drake, the assistant principal, who competed for the principal's job when Castaneda was hired. As noted earlier, Drake left Sprague shortly after the vote to become an acting principal at another school. The other teacher representative taught at the primary level. Her reasons for voting against Castaneda are not known.

40. The Extra, February, 91; The West Side Times, February, 91. In an attempt to maintain the confidentiality of the school, the exact dates from newspaper citations have been omitted.

41.El Dia, April, 1991.

42. The city press was generally favorable to CABA since it was regarded as the premier Hispanic organization in the city. This was in sharp contrast to how the local media portrayed CABA's activities at Sprague.

43.While it was illegal to non-retain on race or ethnic grounds, some LSCs did make it clear when they recruited principal candidates that familiarity with cultures of their students and families, as well as an ability to communicate effectively were important selection criteria.

44.Catalyst Magazine, Feb. 1991

45.The attendance area of a high school is at least ten times larger than that of an elementary school.

46. This is a reference to the funding that CABA had received during the first year of reform and its prominence in the citywide school reform community.

47.See Sundman (1994) for a similar analysis.

48.The selection of the pastor to serve on the principal selection committee was not surprising considering the close ties between CABA and that particular parish.

49.This practice was common across the city.

50.Aguirre's maneuver seemed designed to quiet the audience. The fact that he did not consult with other members prior to his action, seemed to demonstrate his authority on the council.

51. While it was often stated that $20,000 had been raised, and numerous fund-raisers were held, we knew of only $500 in cash that was collected and given to an attorney during an LSC meeting. See West Side Times, March, 1991; and El Heraldo, April, 1991.

52.El Imparcial, October, 1991.

53. Voting procedures changed between the first and second LSC elections. During the first election parents voted for parent members and community voted for community. The law was changed for the second election such that parents and community residents could vote for up to five parent and/or community candidates. Being politically savvy, the anti-CABA candidates organized themselves into two 5-member slates, and they repeated two of the names on each slate. This enabled them to win all eight parent and community seats on the council.

54.As noted earlier, the strongest pro-CABA figure, Julia Martinez, decided not to stand for re-election at Sprague. Instead she ran for and won a community representative seat at another school in the attendance area.

55.A special meeting was held after the vote to ratify the new members and elect officers.

56.The Professional Personnel Advisory Committee was set up to be advisory to the principal and LSC on issues of curriculum and instruction. Thus, the PPAC could only take a straw poll and make a recommendation to the LSC about academic programs.

57. According to PA 85-1418, the SIP is to be developed by the school principal with input from the faculty and LSC, and final approval by the local school council.

58. School community representatives are paraprofessional employees who may be assigned to work in a front office, coordinate parent involvement, or do a variety of other school-related tasks.

59. Effective Schools and Project CANAL are programs that exist in select Chicago public schools, but were not present at Sprague.

60. This was an unusual directive since, under reform, the central office administrator had no line authority over the school.

61. The LSC is mandated to evaluate their principal each year, in addition to deciding every four years on a performance contract.

62.Legally, during the term of a performance contract, a LSC can only fire a principal for cause. Thus, the vote for Ramirez to step down was a symbolic one. It proved sufficient to convince her to resign voluntarily, however.

63.Swenson came from a much smaller, mixed race school, in another section of the city.

64.Across the city many LSC members declined to run again. They complained that the work was too time-consuming, and that it was a "thankless" job.

65.Bryk, et al, 1993.

66.See Putnam (1993) for a full discussion of "vertical social relations" that organize community affairs in some disadvantaged contexts. See Bryk et al (1993 and forthcoming) for discussion of a leadership type that is either paternal/maternal or authoritarian.

67.See Putnam (1993) again for a discussion of "horizontal" social relations.

68.Bryk, et al (1993, p. 5) suggest that Chicago school reform potentially activated three "sites of power." These are: (1) the principalship which under reform gains significantly more responsibility and authority; (2) the faculty through the Professional Personnel Advisory Committee which can exert significant influence; and finally (3) the parent community through the LSC.

69.See Morone (1990, p. 9). He writes about "the democratic wish of popular participation" in tension with representative structures of decision-making. On the one hand, representation is initially valued for its efficiency. On the other hand, representation dampens citizen involvement and removes decision-making from "the people." Morone goes on to argue that some representative structures come to assume the trappings of a bureaucratic state.

70.See Mansbridge (1980). She argues that a "flexibility of political repertoire"--the ability to read situations and align political strategies with the immediate aim at hand--is the mark of a successful polity. She suggests that this flexibility is hard to develop in any decision-making bodies, much less newly formed and inexperienced ones such as Sprague's second council.

71.These initial activities are consistent with a pattern documented in Bryk, et al (1993). They find that the first reform initiatives undertaken in many schools serving disadvantaged communities focus on issues of "environmental order," which the authors define as improvements to the physical plant, as well as safety and security issues.

72.Again, Bryk et al (1993) describe many of the first school improvement initiatives in disadvantaged schools as having an "unfocused" quality. They are important, nevertheless, because they initiate public discussion about the school and its improvement.

73.Important to the political analysis here is the idea that if Swenson could succeed in activating his faculty, all three sites of power in the school community--the principal, parents and teachers--would be committed to a common goal of school improvement.

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